(17) That after the middle of the afternoon-tide, the afternoon Tefillah can no longer be said, and evening begins.
(18) By passing in front of him to resume his seat.

Talmud - Mas. Berachoth 27b

either next to this master[1] or behind his master?[2] And it has been taught: R. Eleazar says: One who prays behind his master, and one who gives [the ordinary] greeting to his master[3] and one who returns a greeting to his master[4] and one who joins issue with [the teaching of] the Academy of his master and one who says something which he has not heard from his master causes the Divine Presence to depart from Israel? — R. Jeremiah b. Abba is different, because he was a disciple-colleague; and that is why R. Jeremiah b. Abba said to Rab: Have you laid aside,[5] and he replied: Yes, I have; and he did not say to him, Has the Master laid aside. But had he laid aside? Has not R. Abin related that once Rab said the Sabbath Tefillah on the eve of Sabbath and he went into the bath[6] and came out and taught us our section, while it was not yet dark? — Raba said: He went in merely to perspire, and it was before the prohibition had been issued.[7] But still, is this the rule?[8] Did not Abaye allow R. Dimi b. Levai to fumigate some baskets?[9] — In that case there was a mistake.[10] But can [such] a mistake be rectified? Has not Abidan said: Once [on Sabbath] the sky became overcast with clouds and the congregation thought that is was night-time and they went into the synagogue and said the prayers for the termination of Sabbath, and then the clouds scattered and the sun came out and they came and asked Rabbi, and he said to them, Since they prayed, they have prayed?[11] — A congregation is different, since we avoid troubling them [as far as possible].[12]

R. Hiyya b. Abin said: Rab used to say the Sabbath Tefillah on the eve of Sabbath;[13] R. Josiah said the Tefillah of the outgoing of Sabbath on Sabbath. When Rab said the Sabbath Tefillah on the eve of Sabbath, did he say sanctification over wine or not? — Come and hear: for R. Nahman said in the name of Samuel: A man may say the Tefillah of Sabbath on the eve of Sabbath, and say sanctification over wine; and the law is as stated by him. R. Josiah used to say the end-of-Sabbath Tefillah while it was yet Sabbath. Did he say habdalah over wine or did he not say habdalah over wine? — Come and hear: for Rab Judah said in the name of Samuel: A man may say the end-of-Sabbath Tefillah while it is yet Sabbath and say habdalah over wine. R. Zera said in the name of R. Assi reporting R. Eleazar who had it from R. Hanina in the name of Rab: At the side of this pillar R. Ishmael son of R. Jose said the Sabbath Tefillah on the eve of Sabbath. When ‘Ulla came he reported that it was at the side of a palm tree and not at the side of a pillar, and that it was not R. Ishmael son of R. Jose but R. Eleazar son of R. Jose, and that it was not the Sabbath Tefillah on the eve of Sabbath but the end-of-Sabbath Tefillah on Sabbath.

THE EVENING PRAYER HAS NO FIXED LIMIT. What is the meaning of HAS NO FIXED LIMIT? Shall I say it means that if a man wants he can say the Tefillah any time in the night? Then let it state, ‘The time for the evening Tefillah is the ‘whole night’! — But what in fact is the meaning of HAS NO FIXED LIMIT? It is equivalent to saying, The evening Tefillah is optional. For Rab Judah said in the name of Samuel: With regard to the evening Tefillah, Rabban Gamaliel says it is compulsory, whereas R. Joshua says it is optional. Abaye says: The halachah is as stated by the one who says it is compulsory; Raba says the halachah follows the one who says it is optional.

It is related that a certain disciple came before R. Joshua and asked him, Is the evening Tefillah compulsory or optional? He replied: It is optional. He then presented himself before Rabban Gamaliel and asked him: Is the evening Tefillah compulsory or optional? He replied: It is compulsory. But, he said, did not R. Joshua tell me that it is optional? He said: Wait till the champions[14] enter the Beth ha-Midrash. When the champions came in, someone rose and inquired, Is the evening Tefillah compulsory or optional? Rabban Gamaliel replied: It is compulsory. Said Rabban Gamaliel to the Sages: Is there anyone who disputes this? R. Joshua replied to him: No. He said to him: Did they not report you to me as saying that it is optional? He then went on: Joshua,